

# DIs instill discipline, motivation with incentive training

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“Up, down, up, down, faster, faster, push right now, mountain climbers right now.”

On the quarterdeck, the recruit hovers over a boot and a pool of sweat. His muscles burn from exertion, while his ears burn from the stern commands he is driven to follow. Incentive training is one of the tools drill instructors use to instill discipline and motivation.

Drill instructors and recruits go through this strength-and-discipline-instilling routine daily, starting during the forming phase and continuing to Training Day 68. There are, however, explicit regulations that govern the form, venue and duration of incentive training.

As soon as recruits receive a class on what IT is, they are fair game, said Staff Sgt. Brian M. Akers, Recruit Training Regiment’s scheduling staff NCO. “Incentive training is kind of a tool for drill instructors. When you have 88 recruits in a squad bay and there are only three of you, that’s going to be your tool to train them.”

That tool remains a very effective one, utilized by all drill instructors to instill discipline and motivation, and correct minor disciplinary infractions.

“There is a lot more to incentive training than just push, run and flutter kicks,” said Akers. “You just don’t grab a recruit and say, ‘Get on the quarterdeck.’



Lance Cpl. Brian Kester Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Glover, drill instructor with Platoon 2038, Hotel Co., 2nd RTBn., leads recruits through an incentive training session in the Hotel Co. pit area Feb 10. According to the standard operating procedures for recruit training, drill instructors are required to carry the IT card at all times while in the presence of recruits.

You explain to the recruit why [they] are up here. Let the recruit know where he is deficient, and you are correcting the problem.”

There are many ways of letting

recruits know what they have done wrong, but Akers prefers to use the same methods used in rifle qualification.

“You explain to the recruits as

if you would in marksmanship training,” he said. “If a recruit is not shooting well then let him know what he is doing wrong. IT is no different. It is just used on the drill instructor level to ensure recruits don’t forget any attention-to-detail type of stuff. If your boot is laced up wrong, get on the quarterdeck. If you are not wearing your uniform right, get on the quarterdeck.”

Incentive training can be a workout for all participating, from the most seasoned to the brand new recruits. Under no circumstances is a recruit to be pushed beyond his or her physical limitations.

“Early in training, the recruits are not physically conditioned,” said Akers. “You have them [training] for 30 seconds and they look like it is the end of the world, but it can be a workout for the drill instructor just as much as a recruit, if you really get into the IT session. There have been times when I was administering IT and almost blacked out from the intense heat created by screaming and yelling to get the recruits motivated.”

Unregulated IT is prohibited and strict standard operating procedures govern its application.

“There are [regulations] as to how and when a recruit can be incentively trained,” said Akers. “[For example], an IT card has to be in the drill instructor’s hand, along with a working time piece.”

Recruit training IT must be closely supervised and consist of a combination of at least three of

the specified exercises, all of which are governed by strict time limitations.

“The standards for IT are constant reminders on the face of the card, but it serves other purposes as well,” said Akers. “The card has a lot of useful information on it other than IT, such as flag conditions, running and what to look for with heat exhaustion. It is kind of like a ‘save you’ card.”

IT cannot be administered to an entire platoon by anyone other than that platoon’s senior drill instructor, according to the standard operating procedures.

“If the whole platoon is needing a little wake-up call or a little motivation, you can take them to the pit and take care of it,” said Akers. “There is more room, and with the sand, there won’t be any mud or rocks stick

ing up to hurt the recruits.”

That sand combined with sweat does not add any extra comfort, said Akers. That is why incentive training serves as a constant reminder and habit-forming tool for the recruits to police themselves, as well as remain aware of their surroundings.

“It instills that self-discipline to check yourself and make sure that everything around you is right so you are not on the quarterdeck,” he said.

Incentive training provides recruits

with an instilled urge to do well and stay squared away Marines down the line. Most Marines have fond memories of IT, and it more than likely carries with it a sense of quickly checking oneself over to ensure that one is squared away in mind, body and soul.

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was the use of various obstacle courses during training.

“You have a Confidence Course, and we have the same thing, but we call it the Tarzan Course,” he said. “Except we don’t touch the ground – it’s continuous. You start at one end and you never touch the ground. You’re up in the trees all the time.”

Knowles also noted the similarities between hand-to-hand combat training, or “unarmed combat training,” in which both U.S. Marines and Commandos learn how to use the knife and bayonet.

Despite the many similarities, there are also many striking differences between the two Corps, said Knowles. One such difference is that a Commando must complete 42 weeks of training in order to graduate, as opposed to 12.

Another difference is there are no women Commandos because “the course is too tough,” he said. Aside from a single woman Army soldier who passed the final test “just to prove a point,” no other female has ever successfully completed the rigorous demands put forth in order to earn the coveted Commando green beret.

“Our standards are higher than yours,” he said. “Commandos have to do, in full combat gear carrying weapons, seven miles in one hour, 14 in two hours, 21 in three hours, and the final thing to get the green beret is to do 30 miles in 4 hours and 20 minutes – in full combat gear.”

The way American drill instructors instill discipline into their recruits also differs, he explained.

“When you take an enlisted recruit, you kind of bring him down to the lowest level and build him up to what you want him to be,” he said. “We don’t do that. We instill discipline, but it’s



Cpl. Jennifer Brofer Retired Capt. Geoffrey Knowles, former British Royal Marine Commando, speaks to medical rehabilitation recruits in their squad bay Feb. 18. Knowles visited the Depot to see various training areas, as well as share knowledge of the history and traditions of the Royal Marine Commandos.

done in a different way. The demands are not given in a harsh voice.”

Knowles also explained that pugil sticks, a heavily-padded, gladiator-like bout against recruits, is replaced by boxing.

“Back in my wartime, we used to do bare-knuckle boxing, but we don’t do that anymore—things have changed,” he said.

As training for U.S. Marine recruits changed over the years, so did training of Commandos since the days when Knowles earned his green beret during World War II, he said.

“When I did my training, it was up in Scotland during World War II, and we used live ammunition fired by a machine gun or rifle on the beach to simulate an actual beach landing,”

he said. “The instructors shot over your head to make sure you had your head down. If you put your head up, you got it shot off. You hear this thing whistle over your head so you know what it sounds like. You keep your head down, that’s for sure.”

The differences between the two forces’ training methods may be striking. However, the finished product, for the most part, remains the same – all become Marines.

After the conclusion of his tour, Knowles will return to his home to convey his newfound knowledge of U.S. Marine training methods to the British Royal Marines before continuing his trek to Marine Corps bases around the world.